

D^r Burgess with high respects of
A. Miller

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN COMMENDED.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN FRANKLIN,

MAY 3, 1840,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF

MRS. HANNAH MILLER,

WIFE OF

NATHANIEL MILLER, M. D.

BY JACOB IDE, D. D.,

Pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Medway.

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S E R M O N .

P R O V E R B S XXXI, 30:

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

It is remarkable not only that the scriptures speak the exact truth upon every subject on which they pretend to give instruction, but they have more or less to say upon every subject of great practical importance. Every class of mankind, rich and poor, bond and free, old and young, male and female, find themselves noticed in the sacred oracles, and furnished with numerous lessons of appropriate instruction.

The subject of the chapter from which the text was selected, and which seems to have been penned by king Lemuel, from the instruction given him by his mother, is the character of a virtuous woman, with the good influence which she exerts upon her family and others. The text contains a summary of her character, with a promise that she shall be the subject of a more sincere and valuable commendation, than that which is extorted from superficial admirers by the attraction of beauty, and mere external accomplishments. “Favor is deceitful, and

beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." On this passage, a celebrated commentator gives the following exposition: "The favor shown to young women, on account of external embellishments and polite accomplishments, or of their wit, gayety, rank or wealth; with all the flattering compliments and professions of love made to them are deceitful, and will soon turn into neglect or disgust, if they do not possess more solid excellencies. And beauty, though so much admired and extolled, is a mere fading vanity; it adds nothing to present happiness; it often covers and augments the deformity of a worthless mind; it exposes the possessor to numberless snares, and proves a dangerous temptation to others; it soon fades and leaves nothing but the pride it has fostered, without any foundation for esteem and durable affection; and they who marry on *this account* will surely experience how vain it is. But a woman who fears God, and conscientiously attends to the duties of her station, will grow into the esteem and affection of her husband, and acquire merited and durable respect and commendation." This comment appears to give the sense of the passage in a very lucid and explicit manner. We have then before us this general truth:

Though the favor which beauty and mere external accomplishments procure for a woman be deceitful and worthless; yet the affection, respect, and commendation which true piety secures her, are sincere and valuable.

To illustrate this truth, I shall

- I. Describe the character of a truly pious woman, and
- II. Show that this will procure for her the most sincere and valuable commendation.

The character of a truly pious woman demands our notice. This is summarily given in the text, under the name of the fear of the Lord, "A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." A truly pious woman fears the Lord, not merely because his judgments are dreadful, but because his character is holy. She perceives and loves the purity of his precepts, and dreads to transgress them, not merely because she shall by this means expose herself to punishment, but because sin is contrary to what she loves. There are two kinds of fear which mankind exercise toward God. The one is a *selfish* fear, consisting merely in the dread of punishment. The other is a *benevolent* fear, which arises from love to God, and which consists principally in the dread of offending him. The latter kind is essentially the same thing with religion, or true piety. The sacred writers often use it as synonymous with true religion or piety. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence. The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life." In all these passages and in many others, the phrase "the fear of the Lord" must mean more than a mere dread of the evils which God has threatened to inflict. It can mean nothing less than that sincere regard for him, and unwillingness to offend him, which arises from love to his character, and in which all true piety primarily consists. By a woman that fears the Lord cannot be meant one, who only dreads the punishment which he has threatened to inflict upon sinners. This would not distinguish her from some of the vilest characters on earth, or even in hell. She is one whose heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, and who makes him the object of her supreme affection.—

Until this change takes place all mankind are in a state, in which "There is no true fear of God before their eyes."

She is one who has been *convinced of her sins*, and led to the exercise of true *repentance*. As all in their natural state are alienated in their affections from God, and enemies to him by wicked works, they can have no true piety without repentance.

She is one who has felt herself in perishing need of a Saviour, and has actually fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Through Christ there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared." And none do truly fear him, or feel that benevolent, filial fear, in which true piety consists, without at the same time receiving Christ in obedience to his commands, and relying upon him as the ground of their justification.

She is one who feels her obligation to God, and whose sincere and fixed purpose it is to obey his commands.—Perceiving the moral excellence of his character, his law, and his government, and the value of the blessings of which, he in his goodness, has constantly made her the partaker, she feels that she ought to love him with all the heart, and to serve him with all her powers. This she fervently desires, and prays that she may do. And relying upon the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, solemnly resolves to exert herself to the utmost for this high attainment in religion. She reads his word, and meditates much upon it. She remembers the Sabbath day, and spends it in the services of religion. As often as her strength and circumstances permit, she visits the courts of the Lord, and worships him in the assembly of the saints. She retires frequently to her closet, to hold

converse with God in secret. In obedience to his commands, she is watchful over her heart, her conversation, and general deportment, and strives to bring herself into complete subjection to the laws of Christ.

She is one who not only observes the ordinances of religion, but faithfully discharges her relative and social duties. Is she a wife? She makes the interest and happiness of her husband her own. She seeks to "do him good and not evil all the days of her life." She strives to be a helpmeet for him in all his cares and trials. So far as his commands are consistent with the dictates of humanity and the laws of Christ, she resolves to "be in subjection to her own husband, that if he obey not the word, he may without the word be won by the conversation of the wife, while he beholds her chaste conversation, coupled with fear, whose adorning, is not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of covering of gold, and of putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Is she a mother? Her children are daily the objects of her affection, her solicitude, and her care.— Besides the anxiety for the continuance of their lives, for the preservation of their health, and for the supply of their temporal wants, which she feels in common with every mother, not destitute of natural affection, she feels a *religious* concern for her children. She views them as immortal beings, destined to an eternity of happiness or woe, and she realizes in some measure, that the formation of their characters for the one or the other of these states, is, in a very important sense,

entrusted to her instrumentality. By her gentle hand the pliant twig may be bent so as to give a permanent inclination to the future tree. The impressions made upon their minds by her instruction may be those which shall constitute the peculiarities of their characters in this life, and lay the foundation of their joy or sorrow for eternal ages. In proportion as she realizes this solemn truth, she feels the weight of her responsibility, and strives to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." She endeavors to make them early acquainted with the truths of the gospel, and strives to impart instruction on these important subjects so as to engage their attention, and interest their feelings. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." She is careful to set before them an example which, they may perceive, is in accordance with the religion she professes, and which, in some measure, illustrates its truth and excellence. She endeavors to keep them from the influence of evil company, from places of peculiar temptation, and from all those practices, whether fashionable or otherwise, which tend to dissipate and corrupt their minds. On the other hand, if she is a person of judgment, as well as piety, she will encourage them in habits of industry, in attendance upon all the means of grace, in the association with the wise and good, and in all their efforts to acquire an education suited to their probable destination in life. She frequently entreats them, with all the tenderness of maternal affection, to walk in the paths of truth and righteousness, and adds to the influence of these entreaties, all the motives which she can draw from the promises and threaten-

ings of the gospel. In the use of these means for the spiritual welfare of her children, she humbly implores the blessing of God. Not only does she look to him to give them prosperity in their worldly pursuits, to bless them in their various relations and circumstances of life, but to accompany the means of grace, with which they are favored, with the power of the Holy Ghost, and to make them effectual to their salvation. It is daily her heart's desire and prayer to God for them that they may be saved.

A truly pious woman is one that considers the worth of time, and industriously improves it to the benefit of her family. This is a very prominent trait in the character of a virtuous woman, as given by the mother of king Lemuel, "She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships, she bringeth her food from afar.— She ariseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.— She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She looketh

well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” This scriptural representation of a virtuous woman is demonstration that industry in her domestic concerns, is an essential trait in her character. It is worthy of our particular notice that this description is not of a woman in the lower, but in the higher walks of life. Her husband is represented as one of the elders of the land. So far, therefore, as it proves industry to be essential to true piety in females of any class, it proves its necessity in the higher ranks of society. The particular employments here mentioned, only show in what way the industry of females in ancient times, and in the countries of the East, was exercised. It is not essential that every female in order to be truly virtuous, should be engaged in precisely the same employments here named. But it is essential that she be industrious, and if at the head of a family, that “she look well to the ways of her household.”

Another trait in the character of a truly pious woman, worthy to be mentioned, is her charity to the poor. If Providence has given her the means, she is willing to do something for the assistance of those who are suffering the evils of poverty and want. It is said of the virtuous woman, to whom particular reference is had in the text, “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.” Dorcas, the disciple at Joppa, whom Peter raised from the dead, is said to have been “full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.” So striking a trait in her character was her charity to the poor, that her friends, while weeping around her lifeless body, could not refrain from showing the coats and garments which she had made for charitable dis-

tribution, while she was with them. Charity to the poor is agreeable to the nature of Christian benevolence. It is a duty plainly and repeatedly inculcated in the scriptures. It is enforced by the example of Christ, and all the primitive Christians. It must therefore be considered as a trait in the character of a truly pious woman. After the example of him, "who though rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich," she considers the circumstances of the poor, and makes exertions to relieve them. She remembers them in sickness, in affliction, and in times of scarcity and want, and not only sympathizes with them in their sufferings, but actually sacrifices a portion of her own comforts for the supply of their necessities.

A truly virtuous woman will be actively engaged in the promotion of religion. Her love to Christ will influence her to make exertions and sacrifices for the honor of his name. Virtuous females were found among the most devoted friends of Christ, when he was here upon earth. There was one that washed his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. There was one who brought a box of very precious ointment, which might have been sold for three hundred pence, and poured it upon his head, in testimony of her affection and esteem. Pious women were among the number who ministered to his necessities as he went about doing good. They followed him in tears to the cross. They went to the tomb to see where he was laid. They prepared sweet spices to anoint his body. They were the first to learn and proclaim the joyful tidings of his resurrection, being the first to visit the sepulchre, after the rest of the Sabbath.

They were among the best friends that the Apostles found, as they went from place to place to preach the gospel of Christ. Their friendship, their hospitality, their fervent prayers, and active co-operation, are repeatedly acknowledged by these holy men, as a great consolation and support in their arduous labors.

The love of Christ pervades the hearts of pious females at the present day. It is to him, that they are now primarily devoted. There is no piety without a supreme attachment to Christ, and willingness to relinquish every interest which is seen to be inconsistent with the promotion of his cause. We are acquainted with those to whom "he is precious," who esteem him as the "chiefest among ten thousands, and the one altogether lovely." They feel their need of him as a Saviour from sin, and lay themselves at his feet for mercy. They love his word, his ordinances, and his people; and one great object for which they wish to live is to honor their Saviour, and to do good to their fellow creatures. They lament the prevalence of vice and impiety in the places where they reside, and devoutly pray for the effusions of that Spirit, by whom sinners are converted, and saints quickened.— They consider the condition of those who are destitute of the means of grace, and not only pray to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls to send them the gospel, but cheerfully contribute, according to their ability, for the accomplishment of the great object of their prayers. In their estimation there is no poverty like that which consists in a destitution of spiritual things, and consequently there is no object which lies nearer their hearts, or presents stronger claims upon their benevolence, than the spread of the gospel.

This, I consider a scriptural representation of a truly pious woman. I will not say, that no one has any true piety, who is not in all respects what I have here described. There may be some in whose hearts a spark of grace has been kindled, who have not as yet the knowledge and experience requisite to the formation of such a character in all its dimensions. There may be those, whose hearts have been in a measure sanctified, that have not talents equal to the performance of all which has been represented in this discourse, as the conduct of a truly virtuous woman. And there may, perhaps, be some truly pious females, whose circumstances do not exactly answer to those in which the character now drawn, is supposed to be placed, and who of course will not find every thing in it corresponding to their own feelings and conduct.— But it is believed that this is agreeable to the general language in which the scriptures describe a truly pious woman, and that it will be found to agree with all of this character, whose attainments and circumstances are similar to the one supposed.

Having described the character of a truly pious woman, I now proceed to show

II. That this character will procure for her the most sincere and valuable commendation. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be *praised*.” Here let it be observed in the first place, that such a character, as I have described, is an object of the cordial affection and respect of all the good. A truly pious woman may have things pertaining to her character, which even the good can neither love nor esteem. But these are not her piety. This, although it may be somewhat obscured by indiscretion and other pecu-

liarities which no person of taste can relish, will so far as it *does* appear, excite the affection and esteem of all the good. On account of certain defects in their disposition, education, or manners, some pious females may not be so highly esteemed for their piety as others are, who are free from these defects, or as they themselves would be, were it not for the detracting influence of these defects. But if they appear to be under the influence of the fear and love of God; if they are the subjects of true humility and penitence for sin; if they give evidence of sincere attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ, and an humble dependence upon him for salvation; if they observe the institutions of the gospel, and faithfully discharge their relative and social duties; if they reverence their husbands, and love their children, look well to the ways of their household, extend the hand of charity to the poor, and are actively engaged in the promotion of religion, no truly good person can feel indifferent to their characters. On the other hand, they will be both highly loved and respected by every one who has a heart to approve of what is right. Though they may be disliked by the wicked, and receive their measure of that reproach and slander which has ever been the portion of the saints; yet so far as their characters are known to the good, they will be the objects of their cordial affection and respect, and consequently of their commendation, for mankind invariably speak in praise of those whom they love and esteem. It is here to be distinctly noticed, that they are the objects of *sincere* and *valuable* commendation. It is not a selfish, mercenary, or deceitful affection, which leads individuals to speak in their praise. The righteous approve of their character, and speak in their praise from a real conviction

of their worth, and a desire to do them honor. This commendation is valuable, because it arises from a real conviction of their worth, and is sincerely bestowed. It is valuable, because it is an expression of the feelings of a good, and not of an evil heart. There is a difference in the nature of this commendation, from every species of false praise bestowed upon females. They are sometimes commended for their beauty, wit, or sprightliness, for their wealth, or connexions, when their professed admirers have no conviction of their real worth, and no sincere regard for their honor or happiness in the praises they bestow. Their favor is deceitful; and the beauty, with the other superficial qualities, which procure it for them, is vain.

2. The traits of character peculiar to a truly pious woman, are such as *all the world* must *respect*. They are, as we have seen, both loved and respected by the righteous. They are *respected* though they may not be *loved*, by all the *world*. There is something in true piety, which however it may be disliked by those who are uneasy at its restraints, and unwilling to submit to its requisitions, is, and must be an object of their *respect*. No one can become acquainted with the nature and tendency of this, without feeling a deep sense of its worth, and paying it the homage of his soul. Unwilling as the world are to give God their hearts, they all feel that it is *right* that they should love him, and they cannot but respect others that do. And though they may not feel disposed to perform the duties of religion themselves, yet they see clearly that these are obligatory upon all, and they cannot but cherish a more favorable opinion of those who perform, than of those who neglect them. A woman of true piety is therefore the object of *respect*, by all who know her. And this

respect which is excited by the exhibition of piety, will lead to an acknowledgement of her worth. Many will speak in her praise, from a conviction of her worth, who feel no particular regard to her person, or desire for her happiness. This commendation is not, indeed, so desirable as that which arises from a cordial approbation of her virtues and a desire for the promotion of her happiness; but is valuable as a testimony to her merit, which cannot be suspected of partiality. There are many who have a testimony in their favor in the consciences of both the good and the bad, of friends and enemies, and this testimony which conscience bears in their favor, will often procure for them the decided commendation of multitudes.

3. Many who are benefited, by the influence of a truly pious woman, will cherish toward her the most sincere affection and gratitude. We have seen the salutary influence which she exerts upon her family, and upon others within her sphere. To the advantages which they derive from this influence many of them will not be insensible. They will soon learn to view her as one of their most valuable friends, and cherish towards her the warmest affection and gratitude. Her children, provided for by her industry, grown wise by her instruction, made happy by her constant attention and kindness, "rise up and call her blessed." "Her husband, also," relieved in his labors, by her kind participation of his cares, cheered in regard to his prospects by the skill and fidelity with which she manages his domestic concerns, and soothed under his trials by the constancy of her affection, "*praiseth her*;" and, with a partiality which his opportunity to know her worth renders pardonable, and even becoming, exclaims, "Many daughters have done virtuously; but thou excellest them all."

The poor and afflicted, who are relieved in their distress by her liberality and kindness, will look upon her as a benefactress, and cherish a grateful recollection of the blessings which she has conferred upon them. Having often been the known instrument of their happiness, she can scarcely fail to be the object of their warm affections. And while they love her, and remember her favors with gratitude, they will not speak evil, but good, respecting her. It will not only be a pleasure to them to hear her name mentioned in terms of commendation, but they will delight to bear their own testimony to her worth, and speak her praise.

4. The good effects, which are produced by an eminently pious woman, will long *remain* as honorable testimonials of her worth. If she has succeeded in "training up her children in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it." Long after she is slumbering in the grave, they will live, not only to cherish her memory with gratitude and filial affection, and to speak her praise to her descendants of another generation, but to be themselves monuments of her parental care and fidelity, by the good conduct and fair character, which they continue to exhibit to the world. The lives of such men as Washington, Edwards, Dwight, and Mills, are memorials of maternal faithfulness, and as long as the names or the works of these men shall be duly appreciated, will the eminent virtues of their mothers receive the commendation of a grateful posterity. If there is any good influence which is destined in the providence of God to extend and perpetuate itself in the world, it is that influence which a discreet and pious mother exerts upon her family. This has been known to extend through many

generations, and to become instrumental of forming a succession of characters, noted not only for their industry, economy, wealth, and respectability in the world, but for their piety and the influence which they have exerted in the promotion of true religion.

In every way, by which a pious female is instrumental of doing good, will the effects of her influence be more or less perpetuated, and these effects, as long as they shall be seen, will be a most valuable commendation of her virtues.

5. The character of a female, such as I have described, is an object of God's approbation, which he will sooner or later, in some form or other, fully manifest to all who know her. Every person, whether male or female, who truly fears God, is an object of his pleasure. Solomon says expressly, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." Again he says, "By humility, and the fear of the Lord are riches and honour, and life." The complacency and delight, which God takes in all who truly fear him, may be seen from the following passage in Malachi, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord harkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him." Such language as this shows beyond a question, that God does delight in them that fear him, and that his approbation of their characters and conduct shall be manifested to the universe. The affection and respect of creatures are valuable. To obtain the approval of the virtuous and good, and the sincere and con-

scientious respect of all, is an object not unworthy of the desire and effort of any one. But what is the commendation of creatures compared with the approbation of God; the honor which men have to bestow, compared with "the honor that cometh from God only?" God can give any one, whom he pleaseth thus to honor, favor in the eyes of the world. All the circumstances in which creatures are placed, are arranged and controlled by him, and the hearts "of all are in his hands, and he can turn them whithersoever he will, as the rivers of water are turned." The traits of character which belong to a truly pious woman, are such as God does frequently cause to be admired and respected by her acquaintances in the world. You all remember the declaration of the Saviour respecting the woman who had manifested her attachment to him, by pouring a box of very precious ointment upon his head, "Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also which she has done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her." It is a principle of the divine government, one on which God has always acted, and one which the course of his providence is more and more clearly developing, that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." But whether they are noticed in this world according to their comparative worth or not; whether they receive here the approbation or the frowns of their fellow creatures, at the day of judgment, God will certainly show himself their friend, and confer upon them honors which no creature can bestow. Then they will hear from the lips of him whom angels worship and all heaven adores, the approving sentence, "Well done! good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." "Come, ye blessed of my

Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." There is no flattery or deceit in this divine approval. It means all that it seems to say. It comes from one by whom actions are weighed in an even balance, and from one who looks not at the outward appearance, but at the heart, and who of course can be imposed upon by no disguises. It comes from him whose approving smile is an infinitely more valuable commendation, than all the honors which the world can bestow.

If then a truly virtuous woman is the object of the affection and respect of all the good; if the traits of her character are such as *all the world must respect*; if many who are benefited by her influence will cherish toward her the most sincere affection and gratitude; if the good effects of her exertions will long remain as honorable testimonials of her worth; and if God will manifest his approbation of her character, both in the course of his providence in this world, and at the day of final account, it is a plain and striking truth, that her character does receive the most sincere and valuable commendation.

This subject shows us how greatly those are mistaken, who consider true piety as unfavorable to their reputation.

Those make as great a mistake who consider beauty, dress or any other external or mental endowment, as more important than piety.

That, which procures for females the sincere and valuable commendation of those who know them, is the very thing which will do the same for the other sex.

If a woman that fears the Lord shall be praised, shall receive from God and man the high honors which

have been described, in what a degrading and contemptible attitude do those place themselves, who make such the objects of their derision and reproach?

This subject reminds us that the death of a truly pious woman, especially one who is capable of exerting an extensive and powerful influence, is a great loss, both to her connexions and the public. This I presume is felt to be the case with respect to the death of the late **MRS. HANNAH MILLER**. That she was one who truly feared God, those who were best acquainted with her cannot doubt. It was not, indeed, until somewhat late in life, that she made a public profession of religion. But for some time previous to this, she gave evidence of a change of heart, and was actively engaged in promoting the cause of Christ.— Since her profession, she has been a shining light in the church. Her conversation and deportment have been an ornament to her profession, and the religious influence which she has exerted has been salutary, not only within the circle of her particular connexions and friends, but through the whole sphere of her action.

There was a rare combination of intellectual and moral qualities in the character of Mrs. Miller. Her strong and discriminating mind, sanctified as it was, by the grace of God, rendered her peculiarly interesting and useful.

She was remarkable for her good judgment. Her domestic concerns she managed with uncommon skill, and to the great advantage, as well as satisfaction of her family. Like the virtuous woman mentioned in the context by king Lemuel, “she looked well to the ways of her household, and ate not the bread of idleness”—“The heart of her husband safely trusted in

her.” “She did him good and not evil all the days of her life.” It was not in the affairs of her household only that she was peculiarly useful to her husband. It is well known that she frequently rendered him important aid in the duties of his profession.—Naturally of an observing mind, and often called in the providence of God to witness important surgical operations, she soon became prepared, by the information thus incidentally acquired, to render very important assistance in the performance of these operations. So grateful were her kind and skilful attentions to unfortunate sufferers, and so highly did they appreciate her services, that her attendance was earnestly solicited by some of his most distant patients. Many of them now remember with what singular composure and firmness, as well as tenderness and compassion, she waited upon them in the hour of distress and danger, and lent her aid in the operation by which life has been spared, and health restored.

Her judgment was combined with undeviating integrity. She was not more remarkable for her quick perception of what is proper or improper, right or wrong in human conduct, than for the fixedness of her purpose to do the one, and not the other. In the difficult and trying circumstances in which others around her were frequently placed, she was distinguished for her almost instinctive perception of the best method of affording relief, and for the cheerfulness and promptitude with which she would execute the plan, which her own wisdom had suggested.

The poor and distressed of every description always found in her a friend. She was accustomed to look into their circumstances, to inquire after their wants, and to contribute liberally for their relief.

She was ardent and faithful in her attachment to her friends. She never betrayed their confidence, never met them with repulsive looks, or with the coldness or indifference of alienated affection.

She was remarkable for cheerfulness and vivacity. She was, indeed, blessed with uncommonly good health, surrounded with kind and devoted friends, and in the providence of God, placed in circumstances, in which the hard hand of want never pressed heavily upon her. These circumstances, it cannot be denied, were favorable to cheerfulness. But it is believed that very few women in *any* circumstances, have uniformly manifested so high a degree of cheerfulness and vivacity. She had the power of diffusing life and animation through every social circle which was favored with her presence. Her friends often found their own drooping spirits revived and refreshed not only by the kindness and sympathy with which she has met them in the day of trial, but by the mysterious influence of her cheerful and buoyant spirit.

She had an extensive acquaintance, and wherever she was known, she was highly esteemed. Her amiable disposition, cheerful countenance, sterling good sense, and open, frank, undisguised conscientiousness could not be seen without exciting the admiration and respect of beholders.

In her, the cause of Christ at home and abroad, found a true friend and an active supporter. She loved the house of God, and all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel. She felt a deep interest in the welfare of society, and sought its promotion with a true and honest heart. She took an active part in the benevolent operations of the day, and prayed and

labored for the extension of the gospel to every land, and for the enjoyment of its privileges by the destitute of every class.

She was a woman of great energy of character.— In the exercise of a sound judgment, she was in little danger of undertaking the performance of any thing which was unnecessary or impossible. What she attempted to do she generally accomplished. Her energy of character was seen, not only in the management of her domestic concerns, and in her ordinary intercourse with her friends, but in all her efforts in the cause of charity and religion.

As might be expected of one who sustained the character above described, she came to her death in peace. The following facts respecting her appearance in her sickness and at her death, have been given me by one who witnessed her departure.

“Owing to extreme bodily suffering, with but little alleviation, she was able to converse but little, and was often heard to say, that this was one of her greatest trials. Although in the early part of her sickness, she at intervals distrusted herself, yet her confidence in her Saviour was uniform and unwavering.— She, at times, expressed a desire, that her life, if it were God’s will, might be prolonged. The thought of parting with those most near and dear to her on earth was extremely painful to her feelings. When speaking to a friend one evening of the improbability of her recovery, she repeated the language of our Saviour when in view of his own death he said,— “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done.” Although during her sickness she was unable herself to

read, yet she daily enjoyed listening to the reading of the Scriptures, prayers and hymns. This was a source of great happiness to her, as she could not now retire to her chamber, as she had long been in the daily habit of doing, for secret devotion. On being asked by her pastor, how she felt in view of her protracted illness, she replied, "It is all right that I am thus afflicted, and, no doubt, it is designed for my good, and will result eventually in my happiness." She was asked by a friend, a few days previous to her death, if she felt submissive to the will of God? "I do entirely," said she. If your life is drawing to a close do you feel ready and willing to go? She said, "I do, perfectly willing," and added, "My Father knows which road is best." The evening on which she died, being sensible of a change in her feelings, she remarked that she could not continue till morning. On being asked if she had anything she wished to say, she replied, "Yes, a great deal, if I had strength." Her respiration was so oppressed, that it was very difficult for her to speak at all. She expressed a desire that her children might be sent for, but so sudden was her departure, that only her son and his wife in the neighborhood, were present when she breathed her last.—She mentioned all her children by name. Of her eldest son she said, "Tell him and his family"—but her message to them died upon her lips, ere it could be audibly uttered. When she had rested a little, addressing herself to her husband, she said, "You must soon follow me," and then said, "I entreat you all to be prepared for the change which is about to take place in me. You must all meet it, and it is of the

greatest importance that you are prepared for the event." A friend who was constantly near her and expressed an unwillingness to part with her, she entreated to be submissive, saying, "If we are what we profess to be, we shall soon meet again." After resting a little, her hands were observed to be clasped, and she offered the following ejaculation, "Oh my God, leave me not in this trying hour, go with me through the dark valley and shadow of death, and at last receive me to thyself, in thy heavenly kingdom, all these favors we ask through the merits of Jesus Christ." She suffered a great deal, particularly a few of the last days of her life. She was then very calm and patient, ready and willing to depart. Her reason continued in full exercise to the last. She said "I am going to leave you," and the same moment was, as we confidently trust, transported to Heaven."

The near connexions and friends of the diseased, now find themselves in new, and peculiarly solemn circumstances. In her death, they have sustained a loss which is not easily repaired, and which it is to be feared, they will feel more and more, at least for a time, as they contemplate her absence, and reflect upon her worth. But there are a few things, which I entreat them all to consider and ponder well, not only as the means of alleviating in some measure, the poignancy of their grief, but as a duty which they owe to God. The first is the goodness of God, in having given them such a friend, and in having spared her so long. Gratitude for the favor which they have received and enjoyed so long should now prevail over the sorrow that is necessarily excited at her removal.

The second is, the evidence which they have, that their loss is the unspeakable gain of their departed friend. No doubt her condition is far more happy now, than it ever was here below, and could they now see her, purified from all sin, free from all bodily weakness and pain, forgiven all her sins, and united with the choir above, in singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb," much as they loved her, deeply as they feel her loss, they could hardly desire her return. The third is, the weight of responsibility which now rests upon them, in regard to a right improvement of her example, and the afflictive event of her removal. They cannot escape the conviction, that they are under obligation to imitate the example of their departed friend, so far as she imitated Christ. And the solemn and affecting providence by which she has been called away, cutting assunder the tenderest ties, and bringing eternity, with all its solemn scenes, before their eyes, is certainly a call from heaven to "be also ready."

While I do most sincerely sympathize with the afflicted companion of the deceased, and fervently pray that he may be sustained under his trials, I would here take the liberty to remind him, that he has been a highly favored man. You have, my dear Sir, not only been permitted for a long course of years to enjoy in a high degree the respect of the community, to possess a competency of this world's goods, and to sit under the clear light of the gospel, and in the midst of repeated revivals of religion, but you have had for your companion a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, in whose living example, and by whose happy death, you have seen the reality and excellence of

religion displayed. If there is any man in this vicinity, that is under peculiar obligation to be a Christian, and to live in strict obedience to the commands of God, you are that man. "You must soon follow me," was the parting declaration of one who felt even more interested in your spiritual, than she ever did in your temporal welfare.—Prepare, then, not only to follow her through the valley and shadow of death, but to meet her in heaven.

This is a solemn day to the children of the deceased. They have laid in the grave the remains of a mother whom they never can forget. Often, my friends, will you remember how sincerely she loved you, how deeply interested she felt in your welfare, and how she labored and prayed for your happiness, both in this world and that which is to come. Do you now wish to erect a perpetual memorial of her worth, one that shall transmit to future generations the savor of her name and her example? Be yourselves this memorial. Let the good influence of her example and instruction be so seen in your character, and in that of your children, that she shall never be forgotten.

The individual who has lived in her family for many years, who was her constant companion during her sickness and in her departing moments, and who shared, in a high degree, her friendship and esteem, now feels like one bereaved of a mother. We know, my friend, that the loss which you have sustained is great. You are in circumstances to feel it deeply. But be thankful for her friendship, and comfort yourself with the hope which she suggested to you of meeting her again, and cast all your burdens and sorrows upon the "Lord, who careth for you."

We do not forget the only remaining brother of the deceased, whose advanced age, and accumulated infirmities

remind him that he cannot be long behind his departed sister. We hope that he, with each of the brothers and sisters in-law, and the other connexions, will realize that God has come near them in this providence, and that they are all renewedly called upon to prepare to meet him in judgment.

The members of this church, as well as the connexions of the deceased, are sincere mourners on this occasion. One of their warmest friends and most active and efficient members is now removed. It is hoped that her survivors will see the necessity of increased activity in religion on their part, as the work to be done is not at all diminished, while the number of faithful laborers has become less.— Let the example of your departed sister, my friends, stimulate you to greater faithfulness in the service of your Lord. Let her sickness and death admonish you, that your opportunities of doing and getting good, in this world will soon be at an end. Let the peace and consolation which attended her dying moments inspire you with new courage in the faithful performance of duty. And let the respect which is now paid to her memory by all who knew her worth, and the evident tokens of her acceptance with God in the trying hour, renewedly teach you the truth and importance of his own declaration,—“Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

The language of this affecting dispensation of divine providence is to all the members of this society, and to all who have assembled on this occasion,—“Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”





